

CHIEF Statement on Cultural Issues ***Confronting the Native Christian Church***

CHIEF values the dynamic moral beliefs held by our Native people, as well as the diversity of languages and tribal histories that give us our identities as Native Americans. We affirm that there are many good traditional values within our Native cultures, which enhance the lives of both Christians and non-Christians such as love and respect for elders, family, language, arts, crafts and hospitality. Our Native world views, however, include beliefs that are clearly inconsistent with Biblical revelation. Therefore, as Christians:

1. We acknowledge the supreme and absolute authority of the Scripture, which is the divine revelation of God to man. (II Tim. 3:16)
2. We honor the triune God as the Creator who is above any created thing and worship only Him. (Gen. 1:1, 26, John 1: 1-3)
3. We believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God as the basis of our salvation; we cannot add anything to that work to improve our relationship with God. (Eph. 1:19-21, Gal. 2:16)
4. When we walk in the Spirit we will not be a stumbling block to our Christian brethren in other cultures, or hinder our witness within our own culture through the practice and participation in unbiblical cultural activities that grieves the heart of God.
(Gal. 5:16, Eph. 5:11-12, I Cor. 8:9, II Cor. 6:14-18, Rom. 15:2, Gal. 5:1)
5. We encourage the spiritual unity of the Body of Christ based on Scripture and love for all the brethren across cultural and tribal boundaries. (Eph. 4:2-3)

We acknowledge that some of our cultural concepts have religious connotations that are different from one tribe to another. A Native Christian who obeys God's Word and follows the leading of the Holy Spirit, who is accountable to the elders of the local church will discern through prayer what is good and evil in their Native culture. The evil should be renounced and forsaken such as the current issue of bringing ceremonial drums, smudging and ceremonial dancing into the worship of the Christian church. When these elements of idolatry are blended with true Christian worship; this is syncretism. Even non-Christian traditional Native religious leaders believe syncretism is a desecration of their religious practices because in many tribes they pray to the ceremonial drums, use smudging as a medium for spiritual cleansing and use ceremonial dancing to connect with the spirit world. A true disciple of Christ should avoid any form of idolatry and syncretism because such is forbidden in Scripture.

(Ex. 20:3-5, I Thess. 1:9, Acts 26:18, Rom. 6:21-22, Eph. 6:10-17, Col. 1:13, I Peter 5:8-9)